



**SCOTTISH**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**  
Working together for a safer Scotland

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters  
Westburn Drive, Cambuslang  
G72 7NA

Chief Officer Alasdair Hay

By email: [justicecommittee@parliament.scot](mailto:justicecommittee@parliament.scot)

Peter McGrath  
Justice Committee Clerks  
Room T2.60  
The Scottish Parliament  
EDINBURGH  
EH99 1SP

Direct Dial	0141 646 4501
Fax	
E-mail	alasdair.hay@firescotland.gov.uk
Our Ref	AGH/HG
Your Ref	
If phoning or calling ask for	Chief Officer Alasdair Hay
Date	4 April 2017

Dear Mr McGrath

## **PUBLIC PETITIONS PE1510 & PE1511**

Further to your letter dated 9 February 2017, I am pleased to provide you with factual evidence to address the many and varied issues raised in the letter and in petitions PE1510 and PE1511.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) was established on 1 April 2013 by the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 with a core purpose to improve the safety and wellbeing of the people of Scotland.

In creating the single service, the SFRS adopted Audit Scotland's guidance to merging public bodies, which indicates four main areas of savings - staffing synergies, asset and contract rationalisation, streamlined processes and shared support services. The delivery of efficiencies has been planned and co-ordinated through the SFRS Service Transformation Programme, supported by regular Gateway Reviews.

During 2014/15 the SFRS developed a Critical Savings Pathway, which identified anticipated financial efficiencies from various initiatives to deliver total gross recurring savings of **£55.3million** up to 2019/20. A key element of these initiatives was the removal of unnecessary duplication to enable the service to improve efficiency and drive out cost.

As part of this Pathway, a Strategic Intent Programme (SIP) proposed how the Service would create a fit for purpose infrastructure through the rationalisation of the property estate inherited from the eight legacy services.

The SIP has delivered over **£18million** in capital receipts, enabling re-investment in new infrastructure while at the same time achieving annual resource savings of **£4.7million**.

A key initiative within the SIP is the rationalisation of Operations Control rooms in Scotland. The eight control rooms inherited by the SFRS had limited interoperability and resilience, coupled with ageing operating systems. In addition, activity levels were such that the model of eight control rooms was inefficient and financially unsustainable.

As part of this Programme, the SFRS established a Command and Control Futures Programme (CCF) to deliver a modern Operations Control with a resilient and scalable command and control communications system that would ensure the safety of communities across Scotland. Working in partnership with staff and the Fire Brigades Union, the decision was taken by the SFRS Board to establish three Operational Controls, which would be integral to our three service delivery areas.

A dedicated project management team was established to deliver a phased programme which saw us, first, establish an Operations Control in the West (Johnstone) and then subsequently a second in the East (Edinburgh). Taking learnings from these two highly successful integrations, the proven model was then applied to establish the North Operations Control (Dundee). Together, the three facilities have delivered a step-change in capability, infrastructure and resilience.

In addition to enhanced operational capability, the move to three Operations Controls, delivered reductions in associated costs. The relocation of Operational Controls has enabled progress on the overall Strategic Intent Programme, allowing the closure and sale of Maddiston near Falkirk, Thornton in Fife and both North Anderson Drive and Mounthooly in Aberdeen. Further capital receipts of around **£6million** are anticipated from their combined sale, with some **£500,000** savings to be realised annually from reductions in running costs.

In relation to staffing costs, we have realised over **£3.2million** in annualised savings based on efficiencies derived by the more efficient operating model requiring around 77 fewer personnel to operate effectively – a solution agreed directly with the FBU.

In terms of systems-related efficiencies, we are working towards the procurement of a new Command and Control System for Scotland. We anticipate this should also release further efficiency savings.

In the meantime, technical improvements already made to the North SDA control room include:

- Improving the mobilising infrastructure resilience and increasing mobilising performance.
- The introduction of more resilient telephony systems.
- Replacement of servers – previously a cause for concern due to regular technical failures.
- Operator positions increased from five to eight, with a further two available in the temporary Incident Support Room.
- Standby Control upgraded from two operator positions to five.

Equipment from legacy Aberdeen and Inverness Control Rooms will be used where possible, hence the decommissioning of the legacy OCs.

Turning now to recent unverified claims of mobilisation issues within North Operations Control, I can advise Committee Members that Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspector - using powers provided under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 paragraphs 43B.3c - moved to carry out an inspection into the way in which the SFRS is conducting its operations.

While the Inspector's full report will be available in due course, he has kept me fully apprised of his inspection and findings and has not indicated any concerns in relation to mobilisation protocols or the assurances we have implemented.

In addition, an Internal Audit Review of the CCF Programme deliverables reported (20 March 2017) that appropriate assurances were in place across the Programme and forms part of the planned assurance coverage agreed with the SFRS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in March 2016. A final report on deliverables will be concluded by the CCF Programme by end of April and presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on 11 May 2017.

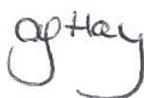
I would like to conclude by offering the Committee my personal assurances that, despite assertions to the contrary made through the media, at no time since the creation of the new North Control have we failed to deploy the correct resource to an emergency incident.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service responds to every emergency call without delay and this will continue, thereby ensuring that we protect the communities across Scotland with the same level of professionalism and dedication no matter where these communities may be.

Our skilled and dedicated Control Firefighters work as a team with their frontline colleagues, bringing together their combined professional knowledge with advanced mobilisation systems to always effect the most rapid and appropriate response.

I trust this information will provide Committee members with the required detail and assurances. Our carefully considered Operations Control model not only improves the safety of the people of Scotland but does so with greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ag Hay'.

A G Hay  
Chief Officer